THE ROMAN MASS

PIERRE MARANGET

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By

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THE PRELUDE TO THE SACRIFICE.

THE MASS OF THE CATECHUMENS.

'Let us learn better to appreciate these great Christian mysteries of ours; let us penetrate beneath the rites and formulae, and we shall find in the Mass, like so many thousands of holy souls before us, the most solid nourishment of Christian piety.'[1]

In order to carry out this magnificent programme outlined so well by Dom Cabrol we shall do our best to set forth the history of the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass, and give in addition some short theological considerations. For you cannot have liturgy without theology; and, moreover, the study of the liturgy ought before everything else to be based on solid dogmatic convictions. But it is to history we must go to find out the meaning of our ancient rites and formulæ. History teaches us the origin of them both, and makes clear the true meaning which their authors wished to give to them.

Born at the Last Supper the Mass went on developing and reached its full growth from the sixth to the eighth centuries in the *Papal Mass* as it was celebrated by Innocent I, Leo the Great, Gelasius I, Gregory the Great, and

[1] Dom Cabrol, *Les Origines Liturgiques*, p. 147.

Hadrian I. This is the Mass we find in the Gregorian Sacramentary, and the *Ordo Romanus, I.*

The Sacramentary is the parent of the Missal. But it contains only the prayers, prefaces, and other parts of the Mass, said or sung by the Bishop or officiating priest, excluding the epistles read by the sub-deacon, the gospels recited by the deacon, and the musical parts sung by the *schola.* The Gregorian Sacramentary is the one addressed by Pope Hadrian to the Emperor Charlemagne towards the end of the 8th century. We have two previous collections of a like nature, namely the Sacramentaries known as the Gelasian and the Leonine which date from the 7th and 6th centuries respectively.

The *Ordo Romanus* laid down the rites and ceremonies to be observed. It was solely a book of rubrics, like the *Ceremoniale* of Bishops which we have to-day. The oldest *Ordines Romani* belong to the 8th century.

'Nothing is more correct than the maxim which lays down that the rubrics of the Low Mass find their explanation in those of the High Mass, just as those of the latter are found in their original form in the *Ordines* of the 8th century.'[2]

The Mass which we priests say to-day, and at which you assist, is a modification of the Papal Mass of the 8th century. Brought over to the West during the Carolingian dynasty, it will be

[2] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe,* p. 99.

subject to modifications: on the one hand it will be abbreviated and on the other hand it will receive additions. Of these fresh elements I will speak little. It is not that I minimise them: they are of French origin, and are in a sense the French seal stamped on the Roman Mass. But they destroy its original beauty and unity; they are somewhat extraneous and accidental to it. I will confine myself particularly to the elements which we find in the Papal Mass of the 8th century, and which are the perfect expression of ancient piety, the piety of the days when faith was so vivid and fervent. We shall see that our Mass is purely Roman. And thus the liturgy well understood will strengthen our love of Rome, and our attachment to the Roman Church. For ought not Rome to have in the hearts of the faithful and in their worship too the place which Jerusalem had in the love and worship of the children of Israel?

In this first conference I will speak to you of what is usually called the 'MASS OF THE CATECHUMENS.' At first it was a separate and independent office: the *vigil*. This gathering, at which the Sacred Scripture was read, psalms and hymns sung, and a sermon preached, was often followed by the eucharistic rite; eventually it was joined to, and served as a preparation for, that rite. The account of the Mass left to us by St. Justin testifies to the fact that this link was

already forged in the middle of the second century.

My subject will be restricted, for I will speak to you chiefly of the primitive and most important part of the Mass of the Catechumens, namely the readings and the chants. Nevertheless, I cannot omit the masterpiece of liturgical literature, which has stamped upon it the hall-marks of Roman genius and piety; I mean the *Prayer*.

* * *

THE ROMAN PRAYER has three characteristics.

1.—*It is collective.* The celebrant recites the prayer, not in his own name alone, but in the name of the whole body present in the church: OREMUS, *Let us pray.* Prayer that is said in common has greater power with God. Our divine Saviour has expressly recommended it, and has attached a special promise to it: 'Again I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning any thing whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Matt xviii, 19-20).

" If the prayer of two people together has such power,' says St. Ignatius of Antioch, ' what will be the power of the prayer of the Bishop united to that of the whole Church? '

Speaking of the 'Our Father' St. Cyprian writes: 'Our prayer is public and collective; and when we pray, we pray not for one alone, but for all the people, because the whole body of the people is but one . . . . that is the law of prayer.'

It is in the name of the people that the celebrant speaks; and so it is fitting that those present should associate themselves with his prayer; that is why they respond or conclude by AMEN, *So Be It;* we thus signify our accord with his prayers, petitions and thanksgivings.

2.—*The Prayer is addressed to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The prayer is addressed to God the Father, the first principle of the Holy Trinity and of all that is, to God considered in His unity, His eternity, His omnipotence and sovereignty: *Deus, Deus noster, Omnipotens Deus, Omnipotens et misericors Deus, Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, Domine.*

In the year 397 the Third Council of Carthage laid down: 'At the altar the prayer ought always to be addressed to the Father.'

This is done, first of all, to follow the example of Our Saviour; for in His prayers He addressed Himself to His Father: 'I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth' (Matt xi, 25). 'Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me' (Jn. xi, 41). 'Father, the hour is come,

glorify thy Son' (Jn. xvii, 1). 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Lk. xxiii, 46).

We do it also out of obedience to the injunctions of the Saviour and to follow the form of prayer which He has given us, and which is addressed to the Father: 'When you pray,' Jesus said to His Apostles, 'say: *Our Father.*'

Some prayers, however, are addressed directly to the Son Himself. They nearly all date from a period subsequent to the 13th century. The best known is the prayer in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, the author of the stately and wonderful office for the Feast of Corpus Christi:

> O God, Who under this wonderful Sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy Passion, grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood as ever to feel in us the fruit of Thy redemption.

No prayer is addressed to the Holy Ghost, 'because it is the Holy Spirit Himself Who, having become the soul of the Church, gives the Church the prayer to say according to that which is written: There are in the Church unspeakable groans of supplication, and it is He Who cries in it: O Father, Abba Pater.'[1]

The Roman prayers are addressed to God *through our Saviour Jesus Christ.* This is in accordance with the precept of Jesus Himself:

[1] Dom Gréa, *La Sainte Liturgie,* p. 17.

'Amen, amen, I say to you : if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.' (Jn. xvi, 23). He has also said : ' I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me ' (Jn. xiv, 6). Our Lord Jesus Christ is in truth the ' one mediator of God and men ' (1 Tim. ii, 5) ' always living to make intercession for us ' (Hebr. vii, 25). By Him we have access to God (Eph. ii, 18).

According to the witness of Tertullian the martyrs and early Christians prayed in this manner. Tertullian writes : ' We say and we repeat to anyone who wishes to hear, we proclaim even in the midst of the tortures that you inflict upon us that *we adore God through Christ.* It is *through Him* and *in Him* that God wishes to be known and adored.'

At the stake itself St. Polycarp, ' the most glorious martyr ' of the Church of Smyrna prayed to heaven in these words, wonderful and touching, which I cannot forbear to quote :

> ' Lord, God Almighty, Father of Jesus Christ Thy well-beloved and blessed Son, Who has taught us to know Thee, God of Angels, Powers and all Creation, God of all the family of the just who live in Thy presence, I bless Thee for having deemed me worthy of this day and hour, worthy to be numbered among Thy martyrs, and to have a share with them in the chalice of Thy Christ, in order that I may rise again to the eternal life of soul and body in

the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit! Would that I could this day be admitted with them to Thy presence as a victim well-prepared and acceptable; and would that Thou, God of truth, God Who knowest not falsehood, shouldst bring about now that portion and lot which You have prepared for me, and which You have made me see beforehand. For this grace and for all things, I praise, bless and glorify Thee by the eternal High Priest of Heaven, Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son. By Him, glory be to Thee, with Him and the Holy Spirit, now and for all ages to come! Amen.'[1]

3.—*The Roman Prayer has a special structure, a plan, a rhythm, a style all its own.*

First, take the plan. The Prayer has three parts: (1) The appeal; (2) The request; (3) The conclusion. In the appeal, God is invoked, and as a rule this invocation is accompanied by:

(1) A reference to the feast of the day, or

(2) a reference to the martyr whose birthday it is, or

(3) a mention of an attribute of God.

Then one petitions God for something in connection with this feast, this birthday, or this attribute. And finally comes the conclusion: it is the final clause which terminates all the prayers: *'Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum;*

[1] Auguste Lelong, *Ignace d'Antioche et Polycarpe de Smyrna*, p. 148.

through Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end,' a solemn profession and a glorious prayer of praise of the Holy Trinity. The wording of the conclusion is not always exactly the same; slight modifications are introduced when there is mention made of the Son or the Holy Ghost in the body of the prayer, or when the prayer is addressed to the Son.

Meant to be sung, the prayers are set out in a special rhythm which is called *cursus*.

These cadences are reduced to four types:

(1) The *Cursus planus*: the accent is on the 2nd and the 5th syllables from the end:

córde currámus
ésse consórtes

(2) The *Cursus tardus*: the accent is on the 3rd and 6th syllables:

sórte partícipes
lárga protéctio

(3) The *Cursus velox*: the accent is on the 2nd and 7th syllables (this is the most solemn):

sérviat libertáte
cápere valeámus

(4) The *Cursus dispondaïque*: the accent is on the 2nd and 6th syllables (this is less frequent than the above):

dóna sentiámus
cóelo perfruámur

Preferably, the final word in the *cursus planus* is one of three syllables, and in the other *cursus*

a word of four syllables; but they can be replaced by equivalents so long as the accent is in the same place:

Dómine Deus nóster (*cursus velox*)
méntis et córporis (*cursus tardus*)

This rhythm and this cadence, which result from the succession of syllables which are accentuated and syllables which are not, make the prayer into a kind of poem.

The ancient prayers of the missal have been shaped and impressed like coins; and decorated with symmetrical and parallel constructions, they remind us of those inscriptions engraved on marble or stone. They are remarkable for their simplicity, gravity, clarity, strength and conciseness, as well as for the elevation of thought and the abundance and accuracy of their theological teaching. Just read with care the prayers of the missal one after the other, and you will be astounded at the doctrinal treasures they enshrine. In the sphere of morals you will find there a code to guide us in living a perfect Christian life. As regards the dogmas of the Church we are constantly reminded of the perfections of God, His power, goodness, and generosity; admirably treated are the doctrines of grace and prayer; and the postcommunions contain a complete treatise on Holy Communion. And all the while our minds are lit up, our hearts inflamed, loving

sentiments arise in our breasts, our wills are strengthened in good resolutions, and divine grace is showered on our souls.

To exemplify this let us take first of all the prayer beginning *Deus qui humanæ substantiæ.* It stands in the Gregorian Sacramentary amongst the prayers for Christmas. It is found also in the Gelasian and Leonine Sacramentaries, and, with modifications, in the *Ordinary of the Mass* at the Offertory whilst the priest is pouring the water into the chalice. It runs thus:

> 'O God, Who, in creating human nature, hast wonderfully dignified it, and still more wonderfully restored it; grant that by the mystery of this Water and Wine, we may be partakers of His divine nature, Who vouchsafed to become partaker of our human nature.'[1]

Dom Cabrol has written of it: 'It is a Roman prayer which I would style classical. Just take note of all its various parts.

[1] The *Address*: DEUS.
qui humanae substantiae dignitatem
and double dependent clause:
mirabiliter condidisti. *cursus velox.*
et mirabilius reformasti. *cursus velox.*
The *Petition* and Antithesis:
Da quáesumus nóbis. *cursus planus.*
Ejus divinitatis esse consórtes. *cursus planus.*
qui humanitatis nostrae fieri
dignatus est párticeps. *cursus tardus.*
The *Conclusion* and Invocation of the Trinity:
Per Dominum nostrum
Jesum Christum fílium túum. *cursus planus.*
qui técum vivit et régnat. *cursus velox.*
in unitate Spíritus Sancti Déus. *cursus velox.*
per omnia sáeculum saeculórum. *cursus velox.*

1.—The title *God,* to Whom is attributed the act which is most in keeping here—namely, *humanæ substantiæ dignitatem et mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti.* Here you have a contrast set up between two statements in a simple and fitting antithesis.

At the same time you have a noble theological idea which includes the whole supernatural order, namely, the work of creation and restoration.

2.—The Petition. *Da nobis quaesumus ejus divinitatis esse consortes qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.* Like the title above it includes two parts which are balanced with the same precision as before, and bring home to us an idea equally profound: namely, that God should grant us the privilege of participating in the divinity of Him, who has vouchsafed to share our humanity.

If we look at the rhythm we shall find that it is a perfect example of its kind. We have two cadences of what is called the *cursus velox*,

mira biliter condidisti
mira bilius reformasti.

Then two of the *cursus planus,*

quaesumus nobis
esse consortes

Then one of the *cursus tardus,*

natus est particeps (less usual).

In this prayer you have then a brief liturgical poem marked by simplicity and elegance, vigour and restraint, and at the same time revealing accurate and deep thought worthy of a place in any anthology.[1]

The Collect for the feast of the Epiphany is also characteristic of what has been said:

> 'O God, Who, on this day, hast made known Thy Son to the Gentiles by the star, vouchsafe in Thy goodness to bring about that we who know Thee already by the light of faith, may attain to the contemplation of the brightness of Thy majesty.'

In this collect we have a fact of history briefly set forth, we have also an act of faith in God Who is revealed to us, and a supplication to obtain the light of glory. What an amount of meaning and doctrine gathered together in this wonderful prayer!

Then look at the prayer for the First Sunday of Lent:

> 'O God, Who dost purify Thy Church each year by the Lenten observance, grant to Thy family to seek by good works what it endeavours to obtain by mortification.'

This prayer begs from God the grace to use well these days of penance, and to carry out and sanctify the fast. In fact, almost all the prayers of the holy season of Lent have reference to this

[1] Dom Cabrol, *Les Origines Liturgiques*, p. 110.

same purpose, but they are expressed in different ways and with an astounding variety of language. On Sexagesima Sunday the Church would have us pray thus:

> 'O God, Who seeth that we do not trust in any of our own works, graciously grant that we be protected against all adversity by the intercession of the Doctor of the Gentiles.'

Why is it that, after a confession of our weakness, we have recourse to the protection of the great St. Paul? The reason is that the Station on that day is made at the burial place of the Apostle of the Gentiles in St. Paul's-outside-the-walls. Similarly, on Quinquagesima Sunday, when the Station is made in the basilica of St. Peter's, who received from his Master the power to bind and loose sins, we pray to God in these words:

> 'Deign, O Lord, in Thy mercy, to harken to our prayers; and having delivered us from the bonds of our sins, protect us from all adversity.'

Thus the ancient customs of Rome, even from the 5th century, are recalled in certain of these prayers.

In the prayer to the Saint of the day we discover a new and inexhaustible mine of spiritual riches. With their various merits and virtues the Saints have reflected one or other of the perfections of their Divine Model. In the virgins we

have a reflection of His purity, in the confessors His zeal, in the martyrs His suffering, in the Apostles His burning zeal for souls, so that they can say with St. Paul: 'Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ.'

Take for example the prayer for the feast of St. Stephen:

> 'Grant us, O Lord, if Thou so will, to imitate him whom we honour, so that we may learn on this day to love even our enemies when we are celebrating the birthday of him who, when he was persecuted, implored Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, on behalf of those who persecuted him.'

Whilst reciting this petition the priest takes the attitude of prayer. He stands erect, he raises his arms and extends his hands. Thus his body seems to go forward in the desire to accompany the soul in its effort to approach God.

This attitude is so native to the creature face to face with its God, that we find it amongst the Pagans and the Jews. Thus, in Virgil, we find these words ascribed to Æneas: 'Anchises, my father, the all-joyous one, raise thy eyes to the stars and stretch forth thy hands, and cry out: Jupiter, the all-powerful, if prayers avail with thee, deign to cast a glance upon us' (Æneid II, 687-690).

And when Amalec fought against Israel, Moses from the top of Mt. Horeb lifted up his hands to

heaven (Exodus xvii, 1-11). David also cried out: 'Hear, O Lord, the voice of my supplication: when I pray to thee, when I lift up my hands to thy holy temple" (Psalms xxvii, 2). And so when the Apostle St. Paul laid down the injunction: 'I will therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands' (1 Tim. ii, 8) he did but consecrate a custom in keeping with human nature. The early Christians considered it as an apostolic command, for Tertullian says in his Apology (30) that it is an apostolic precept to pray with hands extended, and for all time this custom has been immortalised by that wonderful painting in the Roman Catacombs of the *Orante*, a painting so full of expression and stamped with such sweetness and nobility.

* * *

This part of the Mass, which includes the *readings* and the *chants* of a doctrinal and didactic nature, is based on the plan of liturgical services held in the synagogues of Palestine and those of the Dispersion. On the Sabbath morn the children of Israel gathered together in their synagogues to take part in religious exercises. The sacred books were read: we had first of all the reading of the *Law*, and after that the *Prophets*, which included the other books of the Bible. Then *Psalms* were sung, and then a

homily was given by the President of the Assembly commenting on some notable passage from what had been read. Sometimes the Chief of the Synagogue chose some special assistant to give the homily, and at times it was given by someone who came forward to undertake it. The Gospel tells us of Jesus reading one Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth a passage from the Prophet Isaias and commenting on it:

> 'And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up: and he went into the synagogue according to his custom, on the Sabbath day; and he rose up to read. And the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto him. And as he unfolded the book, he found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of reward. And when he had folded the book, he restored it to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them: This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears' (Luke iv, 16-21).

The Acts of the Apostles tell us of St. Paul speaking in the synagogues of Damascus, Antioch, Pisidia, Corinth and Ephesus (Acts ix, 19-20; xiii, 14-48; xviii., 4; xix, 8).

And so from the very earliest days this procedure was followed in the Christian churches. On the pulpit of the lector, side by side with the Jewish Bible, they placed the books of the New Testament, as they were written down, a special position of importance being given to the Gospel called by Origen 'the crown of all the Sacred Scriptures.' We can therefore interpret as a guiding principle for Christian gatherings the following passage from the Epistle to the Colossians (iv, 16): 'And when this epistle shall have been read with you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans: and that you read that which is of the Laodiceans.' St. Justin says quite explicitly: 'The Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read wherever it is possible.' Speaking of the Roman Church Tertullian says: 'The Roman Church joins the Law and the Prophets to the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists to nourish its faith.'

Sometimes the letters of great bishops were read, such as those of St. Clement, St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, St. Cyprian and St. Cornelius. Not long afterwards we find the Acts of the Martyrs read. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings that were aroused in the breasts of the faithful as they listened to the letter written by the future martyrs of Lyons, then in prison for Christ, setting forth the heroic sufferings of their brethren.

At first there was no rule to fix the number and length of the lessons. It is probable that during the first three centuries the Bishop directed the readers what passages were to be read, and also the length of time the reading had to take. Later on the lessons were reduced to three, namely, the *Prophecy* taken from the Old Testament, the *Epistle* taken from any part of the New Testament save the Gospels, and finally the *Gospel*. Beginning with the 6th century only two lessons were read at Rome, the Epistle and the Gospel.

Nevetheless, there remained in actual practice several traces of the lesson known as the Prophecy :

(1) On certain occasions during Ember Days and Lent the three lessons are still kept.

(2) The Prophecy is sometimes substituted for the Epistle, as on the Epiphany and the ferias of Lent.

(3) And there is a reminder of the Prophecy in the two distinct chants between the Epistle and the Gospel. When the Prophecy was dropped these two chants were placed together, whereas they were previously separated by the lessons, as they still are in those few Masses where the Prophecy is kept side by side with the Epistle.

The lessons were read from a raised position in order that all might see and hear the reader. For example we have St. Cyprian speaking of

Cecilian, whom he had ordained Lector after the latter had confessed the faith: 'What better could we do than put him in the pulpit, that is in the tribunal of the church? There he will be seen from that elevated position by all the people as he reads the Gospel of the Lord which he has practised with valour and endurance.'

This style of tribune was known as the *Ambo*. As a rule one ambo only sufficed for all the Lessons. Sometimes there were two ambos, one for the Gospel and the other for the Epistle and the Lessons from the Old Testament. Some churches had as many as three erected, one higher than the other, in different positions. The lowest was for the reading of the Prophecies, one somewhat higher for the Epistles, and on the opposite side the highest and most ornate for the Gospels.

You will find specimens of the ambos of the 12th and 13th centuries at Rome in the Churches of St. Clement, St. Mary-in-Cosmedin, and in the Church of St. Lawrence-outside-the-walls.

***

In the Roman Missal at present in use you will find the Epistle taken as a rule from the Epistles of St. Paul, but sometimes from other parts of the Bible with the exception of the Gospels and Psalms. That is why it is known as the *Epistle*, EPISTOLA. For the same reason it is often called the *Apostle*, APOSTOLUS. As for instance at the

head of the Gregorian Sacramentary we read this rubric:

'The Prayer is said, and after that the Epistle.'

For centuries the public reading of the Epistle was the special duty of the Lectors. The oldest lector known to us is one named Favor, of the 2nd century. His beautiful marble epitaph is to be seen in the Catacomb of St. Agnes. The inscription is simple and eloquent: there are just two words FAVOR LECTOR, and between the words is engraved an anchor, the symbol of Christian hope.

The Apostolic Constitution, which contains one of the oldest rites for ordinations known to us (the 4th century) lays down the following prayer for the ordination of lectors:

> Eternal God, full of love and mercy, Who hast shewn to us in Thy creation the order established in the world, and Who guardest the number of Thy elect, look down now on Thy servant, who has been chosen to read the sacred scriptures to Thy people, and give to him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy. Thou, Who hast instructed Thy servant Esdras to read Thy laws to Thy people, now, we beg Thee, instruct Thy servant and give him strength worthily to fulfil the office entrusted to him, and thus be declared worthy to ascend higher, by Christ, with Whom be, to Thee and the Holy Spirit, glory and veneration for ever. Amen.[1]

[1] Tixeront, *L'Ordre et les Ordinations*, p. 120.

At the present time the bishop, before he proceeds to the ordination of the Lectors, gives them this injunction:

> Take care to read the word of God, that is the sacred lessons, distinctly and clearly, in order to teach and fortify the faithful. Do not alter the doctrine; for it is incumbent on you to guard against changing the truths of the divine lessons through any fault of yours, lest the hearers may suffer harm. Strive to impress on your heart, and to shew in your life the holy maxims which your lips utter; you will by that means instruct your audience by word and by example. When you are reading take a raised position in the church, so that you may be heard and seen, and that the elevated position of your body may be a sign of the high degree of virtue you have acquired. Thus you will be a pattern of a life completely heavenly to all who hear and see you.

By degrees the honour of reading the Epistle fell to the sub-deacon. It had become the almost universal rule by the 9th century. In the ordination of the sub-deacon there is always mention made of the Epistle; but it is only at the end of the 13th century that the rite of the handing over of the book of the Epistle is introduced. It is not mentioned by Sicara of Cremona (1215) in his *Ordo* entitled *Mithrale,* in which he sets forth clearly and precisely the different orders to be conferred. And a few years later Durand de Mende considers it necessary to solve the ques-

tion; 'Why does the sub-deacon read the lessons at Mass, when such a duty does not seem to be implied by his name, or by his office?'

And we have besides a relic of the old custom in the rubric of the Roman Missal which allows a Lector to read the Epistle at High Mass when there is no sub-deacon present.

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'The singing of the Psalms between the Lessons of the Roman Mass is as old as the Lessons themselves; and the custom comes to us directly from the services of the Jewish Synagogue. In the Christian liturgy these chants are the oldest and most solemn use made of the Psaltery of David. We ought not to put them on the same footing as the singing of the other parts, such as the Introit, the Offertory and the Communion, which have been introduced subsequently, in order to keep the attention of the people during the long ceremonies. The Gradual and the similar chants are sung unaccompanied, and the celebrant and his assistants simply pause and listen. On the other hand the ancient chanting of the psalms in the early Church was accompanied by the readings of Sacred Writ.[1]

The GRADUAL (*psalmus gradualis, graduale*) gets its name from the fact that it was sung on

[1] Mgr. Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, p. 129.

the steps (gradus) of the Ambo. It was what is known as a psalm with responses (*psalmus responsiorius*), said as we to-day say the Psalm at the beginning of Matins, the *Venite, exultemus Domino*. In such psalms after each verse, sung by one person, the chair respond by a refrain taken from the psalm or inspired by it. For the sake of brevity the psalm is omitted, and there only remain a verse and its response.

The ALLELUIA is a chant full of joy and mystery. St. John hears it sung in heaven: 'And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying: *Alleluia*: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, hath reigned.' (Apoc. xix, 6).

The word *alleluia* is made up of two Hebrew words: *Halelu*, praise, and *Yah*, an abbreviation of the sacred name, Yahweh. It therefore signifies: Praise the Lord. In the Greek translation of the Bible this word is not translated, but is rightly left in the form consecrated by liturgical usage, and it is thence that we get in the Latin *alleluia*.

These are the directions for the chanting of the *alleluia*: twice *alleluia* is sung; the second time it is sung the final 'A' is sung joyfully on a series of notes. It is called in Latin the *jubilus*, and St. Augustine gives this very apt explanation: 'He who sings the *jubilus* does not express

himself by words; he gives forth a joyous sound not put into words. Transported by joy he does not make use of expressions which are powerless to reveal his sentiments; he breaks out into song without using words. His song makes known his joy too great for words to express.' St. Jerome says: 'We sing the *jubilus*, because we cannot put into words, or syllables or letters how much we ought to praise God.' After the *jubilus* comes a versicle, the *versus alleluiaticus;* then *alleluia* is repeated following on the *jubilus*.

The alleluia being an expression of joy it is omitted from Septuagesima till Holy Saturday. Septuagesima Sunday is thus announced in the Martyrology: '*Septuagesima Sunday, the day when the Canticle of the Lord,* ALLELUIA, *is put aside.*' But it is with a kind of regret that the Church lays aside this hymn of joy which is kept on unceasingly before the throne of the Lamb, in the heavenly Jerusalem. The Church on earth glories in the fact that it is an echo of the Jerusalem above. It takes leave of the *alleluia* by wishing it a cordial *au revoir*: for it adds to the '*Benedicamus Domino*' of the Saturday's vespers a double *alleluia* sung in the melody used in Paschal time. It re-appears on Holy Saturday with great pomp. When the bishop sings the Mass the sub-deacon brings him the joyous tidings: '*Most reverend Father, I announce to you a great joy, that is* ALLELUIA,' and

the *alleluia* is sung three times by the celebrant and thrice by the choir. And during the whole of paschal tide there are two *alleluias* at the Mass, the gradual making way for an *alleluia* versicle.

The TRACT is sung instead of the *alleluia* in Lent, and also in certain other penitential times, and in Masses for the dead.

From the earliest days this psalm was sung either by one person or by a small group of cantors. It is not separated into parts by a response or by an anthem, but is sung straight through.[1] On the first Sunday in Lent, on Palm Sunday, and on Good Friday it is composed of one whole psalm.

With regard to the tract Dom Cabrol writes: 'The Tract has kept this ancient character of *recitative*. The chant which accompanies the words is very simple and expressive. It fits lightly upon them, and does not drown the words, but in a very gentle manner brings out the cadences. It is one of the most beautiful melodies of the Gregorian chant, and has preserved, better than any other, the ancient structure.[2]

As an example of a Tract we can instance that of Ash Wednesday. It is classical, it is a fervent prayer begging for pardon. This burning

[1] Straight through or *d'un trait*, and so the *trait*. In English, Tract.

[2] Dom Cabrol, *Le Livre de la Prière Antique*, p. 51.

petition the Church will repeat three times a week during Lent, namely on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays:

> 'O Lord, repay us not according to the sins we have committed, nor according to our iniquities. O Lord, remember not our former iniquities: let Thy mercies speedily prevent us, for we are become exceeding poor. Help us, O God our Saviour; and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord, deliver us: and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake.'

About the tenth century the custom was introduced of putting in additional phrases composed freely, not metrical, and sung like the *jubilus*. These were the SEQUENTIAE, the *sequences*, because they followed the *alleluia*. Another name for the sequence was *prosa*, so called either because it was set out without metre or rythm, or because of an abbreviation used in the manuscripts, *pro sequentia* being shortened into *pro sa*.

The first sequences are attributed to Notker le Bègue, a Benedictine monk of St. Gall in Switzerland (912). The sequences became very popular in the Middle Ages, and became so numerous that each feast had its own.

Only four sequences are to be found in the Roman Missal of St. Pius V, which was brought out in 1570. These are the *Dies Irae* in the Mass for the Dead; the *Victimæ Paschali* at Eastertime; the *Veni sancte Spiritus* at Pentecost; and

the *Lauda Sion* for the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. This last was composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, as you know, and is a veritable storehouse of theology, poetry and piety. Although the *Stabat Mater,* for the feast of the Seven Dolorus, is only found in the Roman Missal after the time of Benedict XV (1727), it has been used liturgically since the 15th century.

These hymns are amongst the most sublime productions of religious poetry, that poetry which attunes our souls for the music of heaven.

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The famous monk, Remi of Rheims, has said that the sweet accents of the psalmody ought to prepare our hearts to accept the teachings of the Gospel with compunction, docility and fervour.

We have now come to the culmination of the Mass of the Catechumens, namely the reading of the GOSPEL, which is carried out with impressive solemnity, for in the gospels we have the most important part of the Sacred Scriptures. They are the Word of God *par excellence*, because they contain the very words that fell from the lips of Jesus.

The Book of the Gospels was always treated with special respect in the liturgy. It was rightly looked upon not merely as the setting forth of

the teaching of Our Lord, but also as the symbol of Jesus Christ Himself.

At High Mass the honour of reading the Gospel is assigned to the Deacon. This privilege is set out in the liturgy itself, for at the ordination of the Deacon the Bishop hands him the sacred book of the Gospels with these words: '*Receive the power to read the Gospel in the Church of God, both for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord.*' But in the beginning it would appear that a lector read it as well as the other lessons. Thus St. Cyprian ordained as lector a confessor of the faith named Aurelian in order that he might 'read the Gospel of Christ which moulds the martyrs.'

The Gospel is carried with great pomp to the Ambo, two lighted candles and a thurible being borne before it. Dating from the early centuries this custom is the symbol of our deep respect for the Word of God. It was incorporated in the liturgy from the custom of escorting the Roman magistrate, and in that way recalls the homage paid to the august person of the successor of the Cæsars. St. Germain of Paris in the 6th century likens the procession of the Gospel to the victorious march 'of the power of Christ triumphing over death.' The incensing of the book of the Gospels is a much more recent ceremony. It is mentioned first by John of Avranches in the 11th century. The *Ordo Romanus V* is the oldest

document which records the incensing of the celebrant.

At the beginning of the Gospel the deacon marks with his thumb the sign of the cross on the sacred book, then signs himself in like manner, and the people do likewise. The forehead, lips and breast are thus signed to attest that we are not ashamed of the Gospel, that we are prepared to profess it by our lips, and that we bear it graven deeply upon our hearts. When we sign the book it is not by way of a blessing: it is but as a symbol bringing out and reminding us of the fact that the Gospel is, according to the words of St. Paul, 'the word of the cross' (1 Cor. i, 18); for the cross is a summary of all the truths, commands, counsels, gifts and hopes of the Christian Faith.

When the Gospel has been read, the Celebrant kisses the sacred volume saying: *May our sins be washed away by the words of the Gospel.* If a Prelate assists at the Mass, he alone kisses the Gospel. Although the rite is an ancient one, this formula is found in the Roman Missal only since 1570. According to the *Ordo Romanus II* and the *Ordo Saint-Amand* the Gospel was given to all the assistants to kiss, but this practice was forbidden by Pope Honorius III (1216-1277).

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The chief question that arises in regard to the Lessons is to find out on what principle the various extracts have been chosen for each Mass, and why the Church has selected the liturgical texts. It is a difficult problem, and so far not much light has been shed upon it. We can, nevertheless, lay down the following as the chief reasons which have guided the Church in the choice of the lessons of the Mass:

(1) The order in which the books of Sacred Scripture have been arranged in the canon.

(2) The character of the Feast or the Mystery which is solemnised.

(3) The place where the sacred rites are performed.

At first it would appear that the books of the Bible were read consecutively, or at least the chief passages of these books, as happens to-day at Matins. In this reading of the Lessons the order of the Canon, according to which the books were inserted in the Bible, was followed. In regard to each book the order of the chapters was followed. Although in the course of time this order was disturbed, yet some traces of it remained. Take for example the first to the fourth Sundays after the Epiphany. The Epistles for these Sundays are made up of the entire 12th chapter of

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, followed by verses 8 to 10 of the 13th chapter. Take again the sixth to the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost (excepting only the eighteenth Sunday, which corresponds to the Ember Time in September). The order in which the extracts are taken from the Epistles of St. Paul are very striking. They correspond to the order of St. Paul's Epistles in the Vulgate: the Epistle to the Romans, then 1st Corinthians, then 2nd Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, that to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians.

In regard to the order of the Gospels there is one interesting feature to point out; during the two weeks that precede Palm Sunday, and from the Octave of Easter to Pentecost the Gospels are taken from St. John; during the rest of the year they are taken from the Synoptics.

But as the Feasts of Our Lord become more numerous, and as the Christian year develops in structure and order, we find naturally enough that the Lessons of the Mass are taken from the canonical writings which bear most directly on the various mysteries of the liturgical year.

For instance on the Feast of the Epiphany the Epistle is taken from the Prophet Isaias who describes the call of the Gentiles to the faith, and shews us the light shining at Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem diffused through the whole world by the coming of the King of Glory:

Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem:
For thy light is come,
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth
And a mist the people:
But the Lord shall arise upon thee,
And His glory shall be seen upon thee.
And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light,
And kings in the brightness of thy rising.
Lift up thy eyes round about and see:
All these are gathered together, they are come to thee.
Thy sons shall come from afar,
And thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.
Then shalt thou see and abound,
And thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged:
When the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee,
The strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee,
The multitude of camels shall cover thee,
The dromedaries of Madian and Epha.
All they from Saba shall come,
Bringing gold and frankinscense,
And shewing forth praise to the Lord.

(*Isaias* lx, 1-6.)

The Gospel shews the fulfilment of this prophecy: a star, 'more beautiful and bright than the sun,' manifested Jesus to the Magi, and they, the first-fruits of the Gentile world, came to offer their gifts, the symbols of their homage, to the Divine King.

For the Feasts of the Saints, the same reasons have guided the choice of the Lessons. In the

case of all those saints whose name appears in the Bible, the extract taken is always the passage in which their name appears. In regard to the others passages have been culled from the Old or New Testament which exalt the special virtue which has characterised the particular saint such as charity, devotion, the defense of the faith, the gift of prayer; or extracts of general application are taken, as for example the imitation of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Christian virtues, the reward of the just. How the Gospel gains in strength and appeal when it is shewn forth by these generous souls who have put it into practice. Read the gospel for the Feast of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus which records these words of Jesus: 'Amen I say to you that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done; it shall be done unto him' (Mark xi, 23). Now St. Gregory bade a mountain be removed to make way for a church to be raised, and his command was obeyed. On the Feast of St. John Damascene, the gospel tells us of the man with a withered hand which Our Saviour cured in the Synagogue. It happened that St. John Damascene had his right hand restored by God after its having been cut off by the order of the Caliph of Damascus: this right hand the Doctor of the Church promised never to use from

that time forward save only to write the praises of Mary.

Between the 5th and the 9th centuries the Papal Mass was not the exclusive privilege of the basilicas. The Roman sanctuaries, around which gathered some special memory, were made use of in turn following an order settled in advance by the calendar. The church chosen is called a Church of the Station; and the Station is the Mass, which the Pope celebrated in such a church on that day, and at which all the Roman clergy assist, and to which all the faithful are invited. Not only in the ancient documents is the Church of the Station mentioned, but the Roman Missal has kept a reference to such at the beginning of certain Masses in the Proper of the Missal. 'A precious reminder not only of the Roman Basilicas whose names are written there for us, but also of the first days of the ages of Christianity.'

Moreover we have sometimes in these references the solution of the problem why particular texts of scripture were chosen for a particular Mass. More than once in fact, and especially in Lent, there is a connection between the particular church and the Lessons of the Mass there celebrated.

Here is an example. On the Monday of the fourth week of Lent the Station is kept at the Church of SS. Sylvester and Martin. In the Epistle and Gospel we have the account of two

raisings from the dead: Eliseus raises the child of the Sunamite, and Our Lord the widow's son at Naim. These two accounts, without doubt, are a clear and beautiful allusion to the great wonder worker of the Gauls, who was given the power to raise several people from the dead, as we know from Sulpicius Severus.

Again we have seen that on Sexagesima Sunday the Station is at St. Paul's-outside-the-walls. Is this not the reason why the Church would have us read that chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, which is a kind of autobiography of the Apostle, tracing the whole story of his apostolate, his sufferings and struggles. And is not St. Paul the great Sower with whom the Church fittingly connects that parable in the Gospel. For he it was that spread the Good Tidings from the banks of the Jordan to the pillars of Hercules.

'INDUIMINI DOMINUM JESUM CHRISTUM, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. xiii, 14).

This is the inscription, concise and bold, which the Church inscribes on the first page of her Missal (in the Epistle for the First Sunday in Advent).

It is for the very purpose of informing our souls with Christ that the Church each year makes us live again in all the Masses of the whole year the life and teachings of Jesus. In the Gospel, lit up as it is by the passages from Prophets and

Apostles, the sacred liturgy gives us a living and breathing picture of the life of Jesus. We are like the disciples of old as we meet the Master by the side of the well, or on the mountain, at the cross-roads, on the side of the lake, or at Nazareth or Jerusalem.

Even more, by her choice and the orderly setting out of the Lessons and the chants taken from the Sacred Volume, the Church gives us an insight into the very sentiments that welled in the heart of Jesus, and with a profound artistry and admirable felicity makes us realise the precept of St. Paul: 'For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' (Philip. ii, 5).

If we see this Mass as the 'Mass of the Catechumens,' it will be for our souls a light, and a source of life and peace. It will be a real and complete preparation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice, if we can say with the disciples on the road to Emmaus: 'Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way and opened to us the scriptures?' (Luke xxiv, 32).

THE OFFERING OF THE SACRIFICE:

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER.

Quod in Coena Christus gessit
Faciendum hoc expressit
In sui memoriam.

What he did at supper seated,
Christ ordained to be repeated,
In his memory divine.

This verse of the *Lauda Sion* is a summary of the whole Mass. The Mass, in effect, re-enacts the Supper. *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*, Do this in commemoration of Me, Jesus had said to His Apostles. That which I have done by virtue of My power as the High-Priest of the New Covenant, that I give you the command and the power to do. Do what I have done, but do it in commemoration of what the Supper announces and promises.

At the Last Supper, declares the Council of Trent (Session xxii, Capter 1), on the night on which He was betrayed, in order that He might leave the Church, His well-beloved spouse, a visible sacrifice demanded by human nature, a sacrifice too, which would re-present and recall to the end of time the bloody immolation about to be accomplished once for all on the Cross, and which would apply to us the saving power of this immolation for the remission of our daily sins, Jesus declared Himself the Priest established for ever according to the order of Melchisedech. As such He offered to God the Father His Body and His Blood under the species of bread and wine. And under the appearances of the same elements He gave them to the Apostles to take. Those Apostles He then constituted priests of the New Testament, and by these words: *Do this in commemoration of Me,* He ordered them and their successors in the priesthood to perform that oblation: thus has the Catholic Church always understood and taught.

At the Supper, Our Lord Jesus Christ offered in a priestly and pontifical manner His Body, vowed to be immolated on Calvary.

The High Priest according to the Order of Melchisedech, Our Lord Jesus Christ, offered *in appearance* bread and wine; *in reality* He offered what He said was under the appearances of bread and wine, namely His Body and His Blood. The

liturgical rite of this oblation is made up of two elements:

(1) *An immolation which was purely re-presentative,* symbolical, mystical and sacramental of Our Lord Jesus Christ: the distinction of the Eucharistic species setting forth in a symbolic manner the real immolation of the Cross.

(2) In this re-presentation, a *real and true oblation* of Our Lord Jesus Christ immolated in a bloody manner on Calvary.

The Church, in the name of Christ with Whom she is united indivisibly in the unity of a like priesthood, offers in her turn this sacrifice in the Mass in the way Christ offered it at the Last Supper and gave to her the power to offer it.

The Mass renews the *ritual oblation* of the victim, as Our Lord Jesus Christ made it at the Last Supper.

On our altars, by means of transubstantiation, the victim is present, and its bloody immolation is represented sacramentally. At the Supper this symbolic immolation shewed forth the Passion as future, and announced it; in the Mass, it sets forth the Passion as past and commemorates it.

In this sacramental immolation takes place the *actual and real oblation* of the Victim, which has been immolated in a bloody manner on Calvary. As Our Lord Jesus Christ offered sacrifice be-

fore His Passion, He offered Himself for immolation; but we, who make an oblation *after* the Passion, give to God a victim already once and for all immolated in the past, and Who, being immortal, remains in glory in the state of a victim, a victim accepted by God finally and irrevocably.

There is this in common between the oblation at the Last Supper and that of Mass that they are both the offering of a victim immolated in another place and at another time. At the Last Supper you have the oblation of a victim *about to be* immolated on the Cross; whilst in the Mass the oblation is made of a victim which *has been* immolated on the Cross. What Christ did before Calvary, we do after. Another difference is that, at the Last Supper, Christ Himself in person made the oblation of His Body and His Blood; whilst in the Mass, it is by the ministry of a priest that Christ offers to God His Body that has been immolated and His Blood that has been shed.

Mgr. Batiffol writes: 'The whole essence of the sacrifice is in the offering. The liturgy accentuates this act of the priest when it includes in the word *offerre* the essence of the sacrifice of the Mass: to offer to God the Body and Blood of the crucified Saviour, the Body and Blood present in the Sacrament at the altar, to offer it as Christ offered it at the Lord's Supper and commanded that we should offer it, to offer it

at His orders and with the assurance that, when we pronounce the sacramental words, Christ by our words offers Himself anew to His Father.'[1]

This expression, well known to St. Augustine, is preserved in the Roman Pontifical. The Bishop says in effect to the Deacons when he is about to ordain them priests: '*Sacerdotem oportet* OFFERRE, *the priest has power* TO OFFER.'

At the Last Supper, Our Lord Jesus Christ performed the Eucharistic rite, and He did it after a giving of thanks. 'He gave thanks,' write St. Luke and St. Paul. 'He gave a blessing,' we read in St. Matthew and St. Mark.

And so, henceforth with solemn praise and thanksgiving the Apostles and their successors, following out the command of Christ, pronounced the words of consecration and offer to the Eternal Father the Divine Victim.

This prayer of praise was called in old days the EUCHARISTIC PRAYER, or the giving of thanks. It is in truth the giving of thanks *par excellence*. It is indeed in the course of this prayer that the bread and wine are sanctified, consecrated, '*Eucharistiés*,' changed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Sacrifice of the New Law offered to the Divine Majesty.

In the beginning this prayer, this unique prayer, lent itself to all kinds of lyrical variety

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe*, p. 189.

of setting. But this improvisation was always on the same theme, and we find it in all the liturgies of East and West. This theme included, amongst others, three basic factors:

(1) An act of thanksgiving to God the Father for His gifts in both the orders of nature and grace—namely, the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Redemption.

(2) Then the recital of the Institution of the Eucharist and the repetition of the very words our Saviour used at the Last Supper.

(3) Then a prayer of praise to the Blessed Trinity, to which the people responded with *Amen.*

How far back can we trace the Roman Canon? What is its origin? We can leave to experts the very deep and interesting study of its formation and final setting. We can leave them to establish their hypotheses with more or less probability. Let them build up these magnificent structures, remembering all the time that they have this one weakness, namely, that they are to remain hypotheses.

I will confine myself to stating some historical facts that are certain, which will, I hope, prove to you sufficiently the great antiquity of the Roman Canon.

At Rome the eucharistic prayer of the present Missal was fixed in its exact and final setting

at the beginning of the 7th century. The Sacramentary of Gelasius gives the Canon fully as we find it in the Missal to-day. An old and unvarying tradition tells us that St. Gregory the Great (590-604) introduced modifications into the Canon, and that he was the last to do so.

We have little positive evidence from history about its text before the 7th century. But this lack of texts and historical documents does not prove that it did not exist in the earlier centuries. From several fragments, at least, we know for certain that it was in existence from the fourth century.

The oldest fragment of the Canon is the well-known quotation found in the *De Sacramentis*, a work which dates from about 400 A.D., and falsely ascribed to St. Ambrose. The author declares that he 'follows in everything the example and rule of Rome.' He says: 'Do you wish to know that it is with heavenly words that we consecrate? Listen what those words are.' Then he goes on to quote that part of the Canon from the *Quam oblationem* to the *supplices* inclusive. This valuable quotation does not give us the entire text of the contemporary Roman Canon. The author's object was to include only that which pertained to the consecration. On the other hand, this text does not tally entirely word-for-word with the present Canon, but it is substantially the same.

Apart from this quotation we have, before the 7th century, evidence only of a very incomplete and inconclusive nature on the text of this Canon. This evidence is made up of very short fragments, and references to it which are more or less clear. But from the 5th century we have a Roman tradition, unchallenged and accepted with reverence through the whole of the West, that the Canon is of apostolic origin, and so must be left intact and unchanged, and must be accepted by all the Churches.

In 538 Pope Vigilius, writing to Profuturus, the Bishop of Braga, says: '*We send you the text of the Canon itself in the form which we have, by the favour of God, received from apostolic tradition.*' In harmony with this ancient belief, the *Liber Pontificalis* speaks of the Canon as a fixed form of prayer, the nature of which was well known. The author considers it a duty to point out the slightest changes introduced by Popes like Leo the Great and Gregory I into the text of this eucharistic prayer, which comes down from the ancient Pontiffs.

For this very same reason a Pope could take it upon himself to insert additional paragraphs or explanatory phrases, but could not change the text.

To sum up, it may be said that, apart from certain slight modifications, we can date the Roman Canon from the 4th century. And if we take

into consideration that up to the end of the 3rd century the liturgical language of the Roman Church was the Greek tongue, in which papal documents were written as well as the works of the great writers, the epitaphs of the Pontiffs in the cemetery of Calixtus, and a good number of the writings in the catacombs, it would seem very probable that the text of the Canon in Latin is an adaptation or version of the original Greek, which had its roots in apostolic tradition.

The Council of Trent (Session xxii, Chapter iv) declares: 'We must administer holy things in a holy manner, and the sacrifice is the holiest thing of all: and so, in order that it should be offered and received worthily and with respect, the Catholic Church has instituted, centuries ago, the Canon, which is so pure from all admixture of error that it contains naught but what breathes holiness and piety and raises to God the souls of those who offer the sacrifice: for it is made up of the very words of the Lord, the traditions of the Apostles, and the pious institutions of holy Pontiffs.'

Short as it is, this quotation sums up well the history of the origins of the Canon.

'The origin of the Canon,' writes Dr. Gihr, 'its antiquity and its use make it a holy ark, as worthy of reverence as it is inviolable. If ever a prayer of the Church has been composed under the special influence and inspiration of the Holy

Spirit, surely it is the Canon. It is imbued with the spirit of faith and embalmed with the odour of piety, it is full of strength and unction. Its language, simple as it is, has at once a vigorous character, and the impress of ancient days and of Holy Writ; it makes a deep and lasting impression on the one who reads it, like to that which is produced on the soul by the dim mysterious air of the basilicas of the Eternal City. What a delight to be able to repeat at the altar the self-same prayers with which so many fervent and pious priests have celebrated the Holy Sacrifice during all the centuries, throughout the Church! These prayers of the Canon have been long since consecrated in the days of the martyrs and in the funeral chapels of the Catacombs. How such a thought raises up our minds and what sweetness it brings!'

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The bread and wine to be consecrated have been brought to the altar;[1] meanwhile, the choir

[1] The whole life of the early Christians was concentrated with all its intensity on taking part in that mystery of the liturgy *par excellence*: "The breaking of bread," the *Holy Mass*.

'The Bishop proceeds to the Offertory, and, whilst all assembled sing, the faithful, one by one, approach the altar and bring their offering of bread, for they are in a real sense co-offerers. And to place one's bread on the paten is to give up that which sustains life, and so, symbolically, life itself. It was themselves that they wished to sacrifice in the unity of the oblation of Christ.'—Abbé A. Creogaert, *La femme Chrétienne et la restauration liturgique*, pp. 5, 8.

has sung the anthem of the Offertory. Over this bread and over this wine the Pontiff has recited a prayer, the *secret*. Such was in the 8th century the very simple structure of the Roman Offertory.

Said in a low voice, the secret ends by the words *Per omnia saecula saeculorum* said aloud. This ending, thus said in a loud voice, is called in Greek an *ecphonesis*. The Assistants respond with *Amen*.

Then begins the Eucharistic Prayer. It is divided by the singing of the Sanctus into two parts of unequal length. The first part, sung aloud, is called the *Preface*; the second, said silently, is known as the *Canon*.

The PREFACE is preceded by a petition in the form of a dialogue between the pontiff and the faithful. He invites the faithful to join with him in prayer: *The Lord be with you!—And with thy spirit,* the people reply. This ordinary invitation to recollection and prayer is not enough: the pontiff insists, and becomes more pressing: *Raise up your hearts! We have raised them to the Lord,* the faithful reply. *Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,* continues the pontiff; and the assembled faithful respond: *It is right and just.*

This dialogue, which is found identical in all the liturgies and which has very primitive witnesses in its favour, can be put down as one of the gems of the primitive liturgy.

Yes, continues the pontiff, *it is truly meet and just, right and salutary, to give thee thanks at all times and everywhere, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, God eternal.* This giving of thanks we address to God through the intercession of Jesus Christ, our Head, our Mediator, and in union with the whole of the heavenly choir, which praises God without ceasing. St. Gregory the Great says: 'At the time of sacrifice, heaven opens, and the angels in their choirs assist at the mysteries of Jesus Christ. The greater is united to the less, heaven is linked to earth; the worlds visible and invisible are made one.'

The last words of the Preface lead up to the triumphant singing of the SANCTUS. This chant, found as it is in all the liturgies of East and West, goes back into far-off days. The *Liber Pontificalis* attributes its introduction to Pope St. Xystus I (119-128).

This hymn of praise is made up entirely of the words of Sacred Scripture. It is composed of two parts, the second of which, *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, Hosanna in excelsis,* an echo of the crowd acclaiming the Saviour when He entered Jerusalem in triumph, is taken from the Gospel. The first part is from the Prophet Isaias, who records in these words a wonderful vision:

> 'In the year that king Ozias died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple. Upon it stood

the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to another, and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory.'

(*Isaias* vi, 1-3.)

Thus the Church sings in the office of the ***Dedication***: 'In the abode of the blessed the songs of praise go on without ceasing, and their loud-sounding voices acclaim the glory of God one in three persons: let us in holy emulation unite our voices to the people of Sion.'

* * *

The pontiff continues the Eucharistic Prayer:

We therefore humbly pray and beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to accept and bless these gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices, which, in the first place, we offer Thee for Thy Holy Catholic Church. . . .

Before all, *in primis,* as a chief object and in the first place, the eucharistic sacrifice is offered for the whole Church. That is the great devotion of the Liturgy: prayer for the whole Church. As this prayer is beautiful in its grandeur and in its simplicity, so it is truly catholic and raises

us above the personal preoccupations of our individual prayers. We ask God to 'give peace' to His Church by delivering it from persecution, to 'preserve its unity,' by keeping it free from heresies and schism, to 'make it prosper on all the earth.' In a letter to the Emperor Justinian, Pope Vigilius (538-555) quotes these words of the Canon and appeals to the fact that they came down from ancient tradition.

A Greek volume which was composed towards the end of the 1st century, the *Didache* or the *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles,* contains this beautiful prayer for the Church:

Remember, O Lord, Thy Church, and deign to deliver it from all evil, and perfect it in Thy love. Gather from the four winds this Church made holy into Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for it; for to Thee is power and glory for ever.

Then comes the mention of the Pope: *Una cum famulo tuo papa nostro N.* In 529 the second Council of Vaison ordered the name of the Pope to be mentioned who presided over the Apostolic See. Some few years later Pope Pelagius (556-561) wrote to the Bishops of Tuscany and told them that to neglect this practise is to separate themselves from the universal Church.

After the reigning Pope mention is made of the local Bishop: *Et antistite nostro N.* As the

Sovereign Pontiff is the centre of the unity of all the Churches, so the Bishop is the centre of the unity of all his flock, which, with him, forms one Church, as it were, in a great Church.'[1]

And finally all the bishops are remembered, 'the holders of the faith orthodox, catholic and apostolic.'

This prayer *Te igitur* is made up of two parts: in the first part God is asked to accept and bless the offering; in the second (beginning from *in primis*) there begins the INTERCESSION. Under this we include a general prayer, for the Church and for all the faithful, including the deceased, and the commemoration of the saints. The Mass is the possession of the whole Christian family, not merely of a few. In the Roman Canon the intercession is put partly before and partly after the consecration. It comprises the following prayers: in one part, the *Te igitur* (from the *in primis*), the *Memento,* and the *Communicantes*; in the other part, the *Memento* of the Dead, and the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus.*

After the *Te igitur,* the MEMENTO OF THE LIVING. The priest commends to God the intentions which have been given to him and those suggested by his own piety and charity. Then he prays for those present. The 'sacrifice of praise' is offered for all the faithful present, for all their intentions, 'for all theirs, for the redemption of

[1] Dom Vandeur, *La Sainte Messe,* p. 191.

their souls, for the hope of their salvation, and their preservation.'

The first word of the following prayer has a deep significance:

COMMUNICANTES, that is, being in communion with or participating in the same communion. This term brings out the union that exists between those who offer the sacrifice and the whole Church on earth and in heaven. We participate in the mystical body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, 'we are all one in Christ'; under one Head, Jesus Christ, we are united one with the other, and with all the faithful on earth, and also with all the saints, who—in heaven, as the glorified members; in purgatory, as the suffering members—form with us one body. It is the doctrine of the *Communion of Saints*.

The Roman Church on great feasts adds after the word *Communicantes* special words to commemorate the feast of the day: *Et diem sacratissimum celebrantes,* etc.

Memoriam venerantes, we venerate the memory of the saints. The *memoria* in question, what is it? As far as its origin goes, it is the tomb and the relics of the saints; in a more general sense, as here, it is the living and efficacious remembrance of the saints.

At the head of the saints whose intercession is asked, is the Blessed Virgin Mary. Then come the twelve Apostles and twelve martyrs. The

number of the martyrs is chosen as a pendant, as it were, to the twelve Apostles. And we notice that these names are arranged two by two in symmetrical order.

The Holy Virgin is first mentioned; she is the Queen of the Apostles, Martyrs, and all the Saints. She is not merely mentioned by name; she is spoken of in words of great solemnity to proclaim her greatness, her power and her dignity. She is called *glorious, gloriosae*; and we notice, moreover, the two titles of 'ever a Virgin' and 'Mother of God,' which echo ceaselessly down the ages as the protest of the whole Church against the heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries. The title of 'Mother of God,' *Genetricis Dei,* is the cry consecrated by the Council of Ephesus, in 431, under Pope St. Celestine I, a cry popularised in Rome by the dedication of the Liberian basilica of St. Mary Major, under Xystus III (432-440).

The list of the Twelve Apostles, at least as far as the order of the names goes, does not agree with any of the four lists handed down by Sacred Scripture. The litanies of the saints give the list as the Canon does. St. Paul is mentioned after St. Peter; for these two Apostles are always inseparably united in the Church of Rome, which had the happiness of being consecrated by the glorious blood of these two Princes, and by the very fact of being empurpled with their

blood this Church surpasses all the beauties of the universe :

O Roma Felix, quae duorum Principum
Es consecrata glorioso sanguine;
Horum cruore purpurata, ceteras
Excellis orbis una pulchritudines.

On the other hand, St. Mathias, who was not directly chosen by the Saviour, is left out, so as not to exceed the sacred number of twelve. St. Jude is called Thaddeus, probably because the name of Jude would be *male sonans* in the Eucharistic Prayer.

Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, and Cornelius are the names of the Popes and Martyrs.

LINUS, CLETUS, CLEMENT are the first three successors of St. Peter.

St. Xystus II, martyred in the persecution of Valerian on the 6th of August, 258, was put to death in the Catacombs whilst presiding over the persecuted Church from the chair of the Pontiffs, and surrounded by his deacons, who were put to death after him. With what fervour was not the saintly Pontiff invoked by that pious pilgrim of old, whose prayer we read at the entrance to the papal crypt. It is a prayer embalmed, in its simplicity, with love and confidence, faith and sincerity : SANTE SUSTE IN MENTE HABEAS IN HORATIONES AURELU REPENTINU : *St. Xystus, remember in thy prayers Aurelius Repentinus.*

St. Cornelius belonged to the *gens Cornelia*, well known in ancient Rome. Elected Pope in 251, he died in exile at *Centumcellae* in the month of June, 253. When his body was taken back to Rome, it was placed, not in the Chapel of the Popes by the side of the Saints and Pontiffs Urban, Pontian, Anterus and Fabian, but in the crypt of Lucinus, near to the cemetery of Callixtus.

After the names of the five popes and martyrs there comes the name of St. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage. He was the first African Bishop to receive the palm of martyrdom. He was well known in Rome, where his *natal day* was celebrated in the 4th century in the Cemetery of Callixtus, as we know from a calendar drawn up at Rome in the year 354 during the pontificate of Pope Tiberius.

St. Lawrence is the Archdeacon of Pope Xystus II. It was on the 10th day of August, 258, during the persecution of Valerian, and some few days after Xystus II, that St. Lawrence suffered martyrdom. The body of the illustrious deacon was taken and buried in the estate of Cyriacus in the *Ager Veranus*, in the Tiburtine Way. St. Lawrence rose to such fame that he was venerated almost as highly as St. Peter and St. Paul.

St. Leo in a homily thus speaks of him: 'From the East to the West Rome is made famous by Lawrence, as Jerusalem is by Stephen.'

And finally five lay martyrs are mentioned. First we have St. Chrysogonus. We have his basilica in the Trastevere mentioned first in the acts of the Council held at Rome during the pontificate of Pope Symmacus. Then come Saints JOHN and PAUL deeply revered in the Church which they, the Senator Byzantius and his son Pammachus, had founded by converting their palace on the Cœlian Hill into a basilica. They were well known not only on account of their friendship with St. Jerome, but also on account of their great works of charity. And, finally, St. Cosmas and St. Damian are invoked. They were martyrs of the East, and during the Byzantine period there was great devotion to them in Rome.

'There is only question of saints who were martyrs. The reason is not far to seek. During the very early centuries the devotion of the Church was given almost exclusively to martyrs, for the Church lived in a period of persecution. It therefore came about that special consideration was paid to that mark of sanctity which consisted in giving one's life rather than deny the faith, and also as a supreme profession of love for Christ. When the days of persecution were over, and martyrdom became rarer, more attention was paid to evidences of holiness, which hitherto had occupied a secondary place in the minds of the faithful. It was recognised that it was possible to acquire heroic sanctity by a kind of moral

martyrdom as well as by martyrdom of blood. This moral martyrdom consisted in sacrificing oneself at all times in everything so as to live only for God, and thus attain the heights of perfection. This, then, is the origin of the cult of the Saints other than Martyrs. The fact that the Roman Canon mentions only martyrs goes to shew its great antiquity."[1]

In the Canon mention is made of ROMAN SAINTS alone. They are those illustrious martyrs of whom the Church of Rome rightly boasted, or who were honoured in a special way. In that way our Liturgy fosters amongst us a filial love of the Roman Church. But the list is not less catholic: it ends by a general mention of all the saints: *et omnium sanctorum.*

*
* *

The celebrant then pronounces the words: HANC IGITUR:

> This oblation of our service and that of all Thy family, we pray Thee, O Lord, favourably to accept: Deign to establish our days in peace and deliver us from eternal damnation, so that we may be counted amongst the number of Thy elect.

According to the *Liber Pontificalis* the second part of this prayer was added by Pope St.

[1] Henri Laboureau, *Le Messe au cours des ages*, p. 132.

Gregory the Great. It is possible that this prayer was inspired by the invasion of the Barbarians with all its train of evils.

There is an echo of the words *servitutis nostrae sed et cunctae familiae tuae* in these words of the prayer *Unde et memores: nos servi tui sed et plebs tua sancta.* The servants of God include the celebrant and his ministers—at first the whole body of the priests, the bishop and the priests who celebrated with him. We mean by the family of God or the holy people of God all those present —namely, the faithful gathered round the bishop.

You are doubtless aware that on certain feasts there was an addition made at the beginning of the HANC IGITUR: On *Holy Thursday* a reference is made to the institution of the Eucharist; also at *Easter* and *Pentecost* allusion is made to the neophytes who in early days received solemn baptism only on the vigils of these Feasts; and in the Mass for *the Consecration of a Bishop* there is reference made to that fact. In former times these variants were more numerous; and in the Sacramentary of Gelasius we find no less than thirty-eight variations. The QUAM OBLATIONEM is the prayer immediately preceding the consecration. A great grace is asked of God, namely the change of the bread and the wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The celebrant adds one epithet to another in order to bring out the importance of his prayer.

He prays that the offering should be blessed, *benedictam—in omnibus,* in all things, fully, with no reserve and in the full meaning of the term. St. Paul makes doubly clear to us the strength and the force of this term : 'The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' (I Cor. x, 16). The blessing here in question is the most sublime we can imagine, it is none other than transubstantiation.

He prays that the offering should be blessed and acknowledged by God, ratified as reasonable and acceptable in His sight, in order that it may become for us the Body and Blood of the well-beloved Son of God, Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

* * *

Now we come to the culminating point of the Eucharistic Prayer, to the very heart of the Canon —to the CONSECRATION.

The account of the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist is given by the three synoptics, St. Matthew (xxvi, 26-28); St. Mark (xiv, 22-24); St. Luke (xxii, 19-20); and also by St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (xi, 23-26). The text of the Roman Canon does not literally reproduce any of these texts. It combines them, and completes them by features handed down by tradition. This liturgical version, which has a

setting of its own, differs only in form and not in substance from the versions of scripture.

It must be noted that the liturgical narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist, if indeed it can be called a narrative, is not merely like the accounts in the Gospels and in St. Paul. It is something more: it is an act. The words pronounced by the priest at this moment bring about and effect what they signify. *Sacerdos alter Christus,* it is here especially that the priest is verily another Christ. It is for him to take the second place, and divest himself in a sense of his own personality, in order that he may take on the person of Christ. He holds the place of Jesus Christ. In the name of the Saviour he acts and speaks. In order to carry this out more faithfully and in a way almost dramatic he repeats the words of the Saviour and rehearses His actions,

> Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands; and, with His eyes lifted up towards Heaven, giving thanks to Thee, Almighty God, His Father, He blessed it, brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this, FOR THIS IS MY BODY.
>
> In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, giving Thee also thanks, He blessed and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and drink ye all of this, FOR THIS IS THE

CHALICE OF MY BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT, THE MYSTERY OF FAITH; WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU, AND FOR MANY, TO THE REMISSION OF SINS. As often as you do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.

When 'the heavenly words' are pronounced, the mystery of faith, which is also a mystery of love, is accomplished. And this mystery is two-fold: a mystery of the real presence and a mystery of the sacrifice renewed.

The priest raises the bread and the wine, now become the Body and Blood of Christ, before the faithful in order to shew that the Church believes that from now Our Saviour is present in the Eucharist.

The elevation of the host and the chalice immediately after the consecration is a ceremony which apparently does not go further back than the 12th century. It originated in France, and was adopted in Rome.

'The rite of the Elevation is an invitation to adore the Body and the Blood of the Saviour really present on the altar. The celebrant sets the example, for he kneels in adoration "*genuflexus adorat . . . iterum adorat,*" as the rubrics prescribe. You will take care to notice the sacrifice, as well as the sacrament. The piety of the faithful is more attracted by the Presence than by the sacrifice: it is well to instruct them that we are

here at the heart of what St. Gregory calls the mystery of Jesus, and that God asks of them an act of faith more profound than any other.'[1]

*
* *

By the consecration the Eucharistic sacrifice is essentially completed. The self-same words of Jesus Christ, which make Him present under the sacramental species, also contain the intention of the Saviour to offer Himself as a victim to His Father. The prayers *Unde et memores, Supra quae, Supplices* do not constitute the act of sacrifice; their purpose is to place in clearer light this sacerdotal act of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to emphasise it magnificently by expressing that the Church makes it her own and presents it to God.

These three prayers of oblation are so closely connected that they constitute one prayer, a prayer as lofty and deep as it is venerable in antiquity. The author of the *De Sacramentis,* who gives it word for word, brings forward evidence of its existence from the 4th century.

The words which follow the consecration of the chalice : *as often as you shall do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me,* are a development and by way of commentary. Litur-

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe,* p. 320.

gical scholars give to this prayer the name *Anamnesis,* a Greek word which means reminiscence, souvenir, or commemoration.

The sacrifice is offered in memory of the Passion of Christ Our Lord, '*For,*' as St. Paul says, '*as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come*' (I Cor. xi, 26).

The Passion is styled as blessed, *beatae Passionis,* a term of respect, admiration, and gratitude.

The Resurrection and the Ascension are joined to the Passion, the Resurrection from the dead and the glorious Ascension into Heaven. These two mysteries complete the Passion; they are its crown and consummation, and form with it one whole: it is the sacrifice of our Redemption accomplished by Christ and accepted by God.

The divine acceptance of the offering of the High Priest is necessary. For it is not sufficient that a sacrifice should be offered to God, it is also necessary that it should be agreeable to Him, and that God should accept what man offers. Sacrifice is a kind of contract, and the consent of each party is required. Man offers a gift to God, and the transaction is not an accomplished fact till God accepts it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has offered the sacrifice of our salvation. The Victim is agreeable to God, and the public sign of this divine acceptance

has been given when the Victim offered to God has been taken by Him, clothed with the glory which is proper to Him, placed in the divine treasure-house, which is heaven, and placed first amongst God's possessions. The acceptance of the Victim immolated on Calvary, and offered at the Last Supper, has been made manifest on Easter Morn and in the glorious Ascension of the Lord.

This is the significance of the Feasts of the Resurrection and the Ascension.

Then, in memory of Christ, we offer to the Divine Majesty a victim at once pure, holy and unspotted, *hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam*. Our Lord had announced by the lips of the Prophet Malachy :

> ' For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles : and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation. For my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.'
>
> (Malachy i, 11.)

Behold how this prophecy has been realised! At all times, ' from the rising of the sun even to the going down,' in all places, ' the clean oblation is offered.' And this pure, holy and immaculate victim is none other than Jesus Christ Himself, Who has said : ' I am the bread of life ; he who eats this bread shall live for ever.' This victim

without stain is the *holy bread of life eternal and the chalice of everlasting salvation,* the bread of heaven which nourishes us for eternal life, and the precious chalice from which flows a blessed immortality.

The offering of the Church is continued. The SUPRA QUAE recommends our offering to God by recalling the sacrifices of the Old Law which were pleasing to Him. God is besought that He would deign to look propitiously and with peace on our offering. That He would deign to accept it as He accepted the gifts of Abel the Just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our Patriarch, for 'they who are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham' (Gal. iii, 7), as He accepted, too, the offering of Melchisedech, of whom Scripture said that he was 'a priest of the Most High God.' This sacrifice of the King of Salem, which is the most striking figure of the sacrifice of the New Law, has been rightly called *a holy sacrifice, an immaculate victim,* SANCTUM SACRIFICIUM, IMMACULATAM HOSTIAM. According to the *Liber Pontificalis* these words were added by Pope St. Leo (440-461). 'I think,' writes Mgr. Duchesne, 'that St. Leo wished to bring in here a protest against the Manicheans, who rejected the use of wine in the liturgy.'

We read in the Apocalypse:

'And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there

was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel.'

(Apoc. viii, 3-4.)

Does not this vision of the Apocalypse seem to have inspired the prayer *Supplices,* which, in a figurative and symbolic form, and in terms of mystery and poetry, asks that our sacrifice should be accepted and pleasing to God, and, so to say, ratified by Him? Listen to this prayer:

We most humbly beseech Thee, Almighty God, to command these things to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy divine Majesty.

'These things' *haec,* these are the sacred gifts on the earthly altar, that is the Body of Christ, and in so far as it is offered actually by us in the oblation we make of His sacred Body.

Who is the Angel of God here in question? It would well appear that it is Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Envoy of God and Prince of all the heavenly Messengers. He is indeed called the *Angel of the great counsel,* the *Angel of the Testament,* new and old alike, Whose blood flows in the chalice and is the seal and the sacrament. It is Our Lord Jesus Christ, not alone, but accompanied by legions of angels; for He is that

mysterious ladder seen by Jacob, that ladder by which heaven and earth were linked and *'on which the angels of God ascended and descended.'* It is, in fine, Our Lord Jesus Christ coming here as He will come at the last day, *in the glory of His Father with His angels, in His majesty and that of the holy angels.*

'The sublime altar is God considered indeed as accepting the sacrifice offered by the Saviour on the Cross, and which we offer in the Mass to Him and with Him.[1]

Having accepted our offering, He will be given to us in return in communion. Thus we will participate in the altar, that is in the victim offered, in the Body and Blood of Jesus, and by that means we shall be filled with every heavenly blessing and all graces.

* * *

It is time now to pass to the communion, which has just been announced very clearly.

The Church takes up the great prayer of intercession which has been interrupted.

We have first the COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD.

This prayer has the flavour of ancient days. It breathes the air of the Catacombs. Its expressions, with their great beauty, remind us of

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe*, p. 270.

the inscriptions of that Rome beneath the earth. It runs:

> Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants N. and N., who are gone before us with the sign of Faith, and rest in the sleep of peace.

See how these words sing of hope! To die, is not to cease to be, it is to sleep; death is but a slumber. The place of burial is a dormitory, and such is the meaning of the word *cemetery*. The celebrant first makes mention of the deceased whom he wishes specially to recommend to the divine mercy, and adds:

> To these, O Lord, and to all that sleep in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light and peace.

No soul suffering in Purgatory is excepted; for the Mass in the benefits it brings to those who have gone is not the exclusive possession of only a certain number of the deceased, just as in the blessings it brings on earth none are excluded.

After having asked for eternal bliss for the faithful departed, we ask that gift also for the living, who will one day die, for ourselves, who are sinners, but are also God's servants, and hope, like David, in the multitude of divine mercies. We mention, too, the Saints to whose company we hope to be admitted.

The Saints who are mentioned seem to have been chosen to complete the list of the twelve

apostles and twelve martyrs of the *Communicantes*, apostles and martyrs of whom the words '*with Thy holy apostles and martyrs*' are possibly a reminder.

St. JOHN THE BAPTIST, the Precursor of Jesus, comes first (as the Blessed Virgin did in the other list) because the Redeemer proclaimed him as the greatest amongst the children of men.

Then follows a glorious company of fourteen confessors of the faith: seven men and seven women, all martyrs.

First comes St. STEPHEN, the first martyr of the New Law; then St. MATHIAS, the additional apostle not mentioned in the *Communicantes*, doubtless in order not to change the symbolic number of the twelve first pillars of the Church; and afterwards is placed St. BARNABAS, the companion of St. Paul.

Next comes St. IGNATIUS. He was a disciple of the Apostles, and was a successor of St. Peter in the Chair of Antioch. He suffered martyrdom at Rome itself in the amphitheatre of Flavian in the days of Trajan. He is best known by his writings, which were read far and wide. During his journey from Antioch to Rome he wrote seven letters, which have come down to us, and amongst them the *Epistle to the Romans* is, according to Renan even, 'one of the gems of early Christian literature.' Here we meet a soul in which the surpassing love of the Lord

Jesus has full sway, lighting it up, communicating its own fire, consuming every natural desire. The passionate ardour of this love found in the Bishop of Antioch is reminiscent of the accents of St. Paul.

After St. Ignatius comes St. ALEXANDER, a Roman Martyr, usually identified with the Pope of that name. St. PETER and St. MARCELLINUS, the one a priest and the other an exorcist, are the two martyrs of *'Sylva Candida,'* who were buried at the cemetery *ad duas Lauros*.

The saints are all well known. There are, first of all, SS. FELICITAS and PERPETUA, illustrious martyrs of Carthage, who were commemorated at Rome from the 4th century, according to the Liberian Calendar, which I have already mentioned. There is then St. AGATHA, the great martyr of Catania, and St. LUCY, the virgin of Syracuse, both of whose feasts were kept at Rome. After St. Agatha there comes St. AGNES, the youthful martyr of the Via Nomentana, to whom there was a popular devotion in the 4th century, and who is a national saint of the Romans and a patroness of their city. There is St. CECILIA, the patrician maiden of the cemetery of Callixtus; and finally St. ANASTASIA, whose Church rises at the foot of the palace of the Cæsars.

All the saints here mentioned are martyrs. All these martyrs are Romans, or enjoyed popularity

in Rome. Like the *Communicantes,* the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* bears the impress of the ancient *Local Roman Liturgy.*

It is possible that these two prayers owe their final setting to Pope Symmacus (498-514); for, as Mgr. Batiffol says, 'we know from the *Liber Pontificalis* what a great devotion he had to the apostles and to the saints.'[1]

* * *

The Canon concludes with a DOXOLOGY in honour of Christ:

> By whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, quicken, bless, and give us all these good things. By Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

This prayer, concise and powerful, sums up in a wonderful manner all that the high priest has just done and said, and brings out in addition the essential bonds that unite all creation to the Creator. It brings Christ before us as the universal and unique Mediator: it is by Him that God spreads over all creation gifts and blessings of every kind, and it is by Him that the creature gives to God praise and perfect glory.

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe,* p. 229.

The final AMEN is the same solemn one contained in the Roman Liturgy. In the 2nd century St. Justin emphasises the importance of this *Amen*:

> The officiating priest having finished the prayers and the thanksgiving, all those present cry out *Amen*, the Hebrew equivalent for: *So be it.*

This acclamation is the only thing said by the people in the course of the great Prayer. By it they testify their faith in the presence of Our Lord on the altar, and also their adhesion to the mystery which has been enacted, and at the same time ratify the prayer of the celebrant.

* * *

Such, then, is the Eucharistic Prayer, at once ancient and sublime. During nearly twenty centuries Holy Church has used this prayer alone to embody her worship in all its fullness, and to present to Him the offering of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For well nigh two thousand years she has used this prayer alone to pay to God the gratitude of a world redeemed.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRIFICE:

THE COMMUNION.

The sacrifice has been offered up. But in order that it should be complete and perfect the faithful must needs add their communion to the oblation in order that they may participate in the sacrifice.

Fr. M. de la Taille, S.J., writes: 'It is a remarkable fact that men, after having dedicated their gifts to God, should invariably consider that the most important thing was for them to sit down at table and make a repast of those gifts. At first sight it would seem to be an act quite incompatible with the consecration of those gifts to God. And yet nothing is more logical. It is quite true the victims belong to God alone; the altar receiving them is the table of God; and the banquet, if one there be, is God's. But if God in His goodness invites men to His table in order to make them His fellow-guests, and to have them eat and drink at the banquet prepared for Him, there is nothing derogatory done to the victims offered, as there would be if by sacrilegious robbery we took from God what had been

given to Him, and thus profaned what had been made holy. Here is an act of grace on the part of God associating man with Him in the partaking of divine gifts, and raising him up to be worthy of the holy things which He bestows upon him. It is a foretaste of the eternal bounties which man looks for in the life to come; it is a figure, too, of the marvellous inrush of holiness borne to the souls of the faithful by that food which is sanctified by God's holy altar; it is a symbol also of the unity established not only between all the faithful who banquet together, but between them all and their God, with Whom they communicate at the same feast, like those who dwell under the same roof, as members of the same family, and as familiars and blood-relations of the divinity. Thus the fruit of the sacrifice is gathered; and the cycle is complete, which, starting from man to God, returns from God to man: there ascends a poor human offering, and there descends a divine gift.'[1]

The Communion is an *integral* part of the sacrifice. That is why the celebrant must always communicate at the sacrifice he offers, and the Council of Trent (Session xxii, Chapter vi) expresses the wish that the faithful should receive communion *sacramentally* every time they assist at Mass. '*Take ye and eat,* this is My Body

[1] M. de la Taille, S.J., *Esquisse du Mystcrè de la Foi*, p. 7.

. . . . *Drink ye all of this.* For this is the chalice of My Blood,' said Jesus to His Apostles.

By the Communion the eucharistic sacrifice brings about the union between the faithful and Christ, and also the union of the faithful with one another in the Church. St. Paul writes: 'The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread' (1 Cor., x, 16-17).

The Eucharist is the GREAT SACRAMENT OF UNITY. And so we shall see that the Roman Church has endeavoured to express in the clearest way the unity of the Church in the ceremonies pertaining to the Communion.

We will divide the study of the Communion into three parts:

(1) Before the Communion: the *Pater* and the *Pax Domini.*

(2) The rites and the formulas of the Communion itself.

(3) After the Communion: the thanksgiving and the dismissal to the people.

* * *

The PATER or *Lord's Prayer* is the greatest of all prayers. Its origin is divine. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us the words Himself in the Ser-

mon on the Mount. St. Matthew has narrated it in these words:

> And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them; for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him. Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.
>
> (Matt. vi, 5-13.)

St. Luke (xi, 1-4) gives us an abbreviated form of this prayer; but it is St. Matthew's rendering that has been incorporated into the liturgy.

From the earliest days of the Church this prayer of the Saviour was held in great veneration by the Christians. The *Doctrine of the Apostles* orders the faithful to say it thrice daily, and gives the text which ends with the doxology: *To Thee be the power and the glory in all ages.*

Tertullian says of the Lord's Prayer: 'It is as brief in words as it is far-reaching in meaning. Besides the adoration of God and the petitions for men which make up the essence of the prayer, it includes the complete summary of the teaching and laws of Jesus Christ so that it is a kind of summary of the Gospel.'

In Rome the Lord's Prayer was introduced by St. Gregory into the Mass in the place it occupies to-day, that is after the Canon. This we know from a letter addressed to John, Bishop of Syracuse:

> 'We say *the Lord's Prayer* immediately after the Canon; for it was the Apostolic custom to consecrate the sacrifice by pronouncing only the prayer of oblation, and it has seemed to me unfitting that we should say over the oblation a prayer composed by a writer, no matter who he is, and not say over the Body and Blood of the Redeemer this prayer which He Himself has composed. Amongst the Greeks the Lord's Prayer is said by all the people, but with us it is said by *the Celebrant alone*.'

Said in this place of honour, between the consecration and the Communion, it is as a seal on the Eucharistic Prayer and a fitting and beautiful preparation for Communion. 'To ask,' writes Henri Laboureau, 'for our daily bread, which is not only the material food, but also the spiritual food of the Eucharist, to beg forgiveness for our sins, to pardon those who have offended

us, that is indeed to put on those dispositions of charity and religion required, before the offering of the sacrifice, by Our Lord, by St. Paul, and by the author of the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.*'[1]

The *Pater* is preceded and followed by prayers which form a prologue and epilogue.

The prologue aims at imparting to the recitation of the Lord's Prayer a special solemnity. It runs thus:

> Let us pray. Instructed by Thy saving precepts, and following Thy divine directions, we presume to say: *Our Father.*

The Mass of the Catechumens (with *its salutary precepts*) and the Eucharistic Prayer (that is of *divine institution*), which precede the Lord's Prayer, are well calculated to prepare the soul to recite it devoutly.

The epilogue of the *Pater* is the prayer *Libera nos quaesumus.* It is said silently and ends with what was called an *ecphonesis,* or the ending of a prayer said in a loud voice. But formerly it was sung as the *Pater* is sung to-day; and it is still sung in the Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday.

Liturgical scholars have called this epilogue by the name of the *embolismos* (which is a Greek word meaning development), because it takes the last petition of the Lord's Prayer: *Sed libera nos*

[1] Henri Laboureau, *ibid.*, p. 142.

a malo, and develops and paraphrases it thus: May the Lord deliver us from all evils past, present and future; may He give peace in our days and especially a pure conscience, as well as freedom from temporal cares.

Mgr. Batiffol thus comments on this: 'This invocation, *Da propitius pacem in diebus nostris*, strikes the same note as the *Diesque nostros in tua pace disponas* of St. Gregory. It was a familiar thought of St. Gregory to see in the troubles that beset the world a sign of its ending, and we can recognise his hand in the *Libera nos quaesumus*.'[1]

To the prayer to Christ is joined one of intercession to the glorious and blessed Mary, ever a Virgin and Mother of God, as well as to the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, Andrew, and all the saints.

Why is St. Andrew alone named, and why the preference given to him? He was held in great honour in Rome, and his feast was kept with great solemnity because he was the brother of St. Peter, whom he led to Jesus. But do we not rather find here an evidence of the personal devotion of Pope St. Gregory to St. Andrew, for we know that St. Gregory founded a monastery under his patronage in his house on the Cœlian Hill?

* * *

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *ibid.*, p. 281.

There were joined to the words *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum* in the first *Ordines* (8th century) two liturgical acts:

(1) The mingling of the *Sancta*.

(2) The kiss of peace.

According to the *Ordo Romanus I* the Pope, whilst saying the above words made the sign of the cross three times over the chalice and put the *Sancta* into the chalice.

By SANCTA we mean a piece of bread consecrated in a preceding Papal Mass, which was reserved to be put in the chalice during the next Mass the Pope said. In making his solemn entry and before he arrived at the altar the Pope bowed before the *Sancta* which two acolytes presented to him in an open casket.

By this act of mingling the *Sancta* in the newly consecrated chalice the Church linked together the sacrifices and declared the unity of the eucharistic sacrifice throughout all time.

What the Pope did with the *Sancta* was done by the Bishops and priests in regard to what was known as the *fermentum*.

The FERMENTUM was a piece of bread consecrated at the Pope's Mass and sent on Sundays to the priests whose duty it was to say Mass in the *tituli* or urban parishes.

Just as the *Sancta* betokened the unity of the eucharistic sacrifice throughout time, so the *fermentum* signified this unity over space.

Mgr. Duchesne explains this fact very well: 'The Roman Church attached great importance to the fact that the ceremonies of Communion so very clearly and vividly expressed ecclesiastical unity. It is with this unity that we connect the use of the *fermentum*, that is the consecrated bread of the bishop's Mass sent to the priests saying Mass in the *tituli*; this signification is again found in the rite of the Sancta, namely the piece of bread consecrated at the preceding Mass and brought at the beginning of the Mass and put in the chalice at the *Pax Domini*. It is everywhere the same, in all the churches of Rome you will see it, and it is always the same in all the liturgical gatherings, it is the same to-day as yesterday, the same sacrifice, the same eucharist, the same communion.'[1]

St. Ignatius of Antioch had written to the Philadelphians:

> Take care to participate in the one and self-same Eucharist. There is, in truth, only one Flesh of Our Lord, only one chalice to unite us in His Blood, and one altar; just as there is one bishop surrounded by the presbytery and the deacons, the associates of my ministry.

Whilst the Pope puts the *Sancta* into the chalice, the Archdeacon kisses the paten on which the *Sancta* were placed, and gives the pax to the clergy. The KISS OF PEACE, as late as the eighth

[1] Mgr. Duchesne, *ibid.*, p. 196.

century, was given not only among the clergy, but also amongst those assisting; the men and women forming two separate bodies, '*et populus seperatim viri et feminae*' says the *Ordo Romanus II.*

To-day the kiss of peace is changed and placed after the *Agnus Dei* and the prayer *Domine Jesu Christe qui dixisti.*

This kiss of peace is a sign of fraternal charity and the pardon of injuries, as the liturgists of the Middle Ages give clearly to understand. But the ancient liturgy tells us that there was another meaning more profound, and deeper, which fits in better with the idea of the Church. The kiss of peace is the authentic sign of the union, the *vinculum pacis,* the close tie which unites the brethren. It is the sacrament or exterior sign by which we recognise the *unity* of the family.

As a sign of fraternity and of unity the kiss of peace is one of the oldest elements in the liturgy. It dates from the first age of the Church. We read the recommendation in St. Peter's First Epistle: '*Salute one another with a holy kiss*' (v, 14). Again St. Paul recommends at the end of several of his epistles: '*Salute one another with an holy kiss*' (Rom. xvi, 16; 1 Cor. xvi, 20; 2 Cor. xiii, 12; 1 Thess. v, 26).

* * *

We will study in succession the ceremonies and the prayers of the Communion:

(1) The breaking of the bread;
(2) The communion of the priest;
(3) The communion of the faithful;
(4) The prayers of the communion;
(5) The chants of the communion.

* * *

The Communion is preceded by the BREAKING OF THE BREAD.

At the Last Supper Jesus 'took bread, blessed it, *broke* it, and gave it to His disciples.' All four accounts in the Scriptures of the Last Supper tell us that the Saviour broke bread.

Whilst Jesus was at table with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, 'he took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them . . . . and they told what things were done in the way: and how they knew him in the *breaking of bread.*' (Luke xxiv, 30 and 35).

'The bread which we *break,* is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?' (1 Cor. x, 16).

The *breaking* of the bread is a ceremony of the eucharist equally with the blessing and the thanksgiving. We see how important is this act from the fact that the whole eucharistic sacrifice was called in antiquity the '*breaking of bread.*' We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the Early Christians 'were persevering in the doctrine

of the Apostles and in the communication of the *breaking of bread* and in prayers' (ii, 42). In the first day of the week they gathered together for the *breaking of bread* (xx, 7).

On this subject Mgr. Batiffol writes: 'The most important representation of the Eucharist found in Rome is that which Mgr. Wilpert discovered in the Cemetery of Priscilla in the crypt usually called Capella Graeca. He puts the date down as the first third of the 2nd century. We see around a table six people seated; there is a seventh person, seated at the top of the table to the left, who is breaking bread. In front of him there is placed a cup, and side by side there are two plates—on one there are two fishes and on the other five loaves. On the exteme left there are four baskets full of bread, and three others on the right. This is certainly meant to be an allusion to the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, but the whole setting is eucharistic, as is clear from the presence of the chalice; and to bring that out he has chosen the very moment when the president of the feast breaks bread to give to the brethren.'

The ancient rite of the breaking of bread, as given by the *Ordines Romani,* was very complicated. After the *Pax Domini,* the Pope breaks one of the two *oblatae,* one of the two consecrated pieces of bread which he has himself offered, and leaves

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *L'Eucharistie,* p. 186.

half of it on the altar. The *Ordo Romanus I* explains as the reason that 'as long as the Mass continues, the altar ought not to be left without a sacrifice.' We have not yet come to the breaking of bread properly so called, but this fragment is left on the altar whilst all the bread for the communion is taken up from under the altar. It is left there in order to bring out the fact that the bread broken and distributed away from the altar is the same as that consecrated on the altar. It is probable that this eucharistic fragment was to serve as the *Sancta* for the next sacrifice.

The Pope then leaves the altar, goes to his *cathedra* or chair, and takes his seat. The second half of the first *oblata*, and all the second *oblata* are placed on the paten and carried to the Pope by two sub-deacons. In regard to the other consecrated bread for the communion of the faithful the archdeacon has it carried in front of the bishops and priests by the acolytes who carry it in linen bags hung from their necks. Then takes place the breaking of the bread. This is done by the whole of the *presbyterium*. They look towards the Pope, and at a signal from him they break all the bread. The deacons near the Pope break the *oblata* and the *half-oblata* on the paten, thus doing it on behalf of the Pontiff.

Mgr. Batiffol remarks:

'Observe even as late as the 8th century what importance is attached by the ritual to the break-

ing of the bread. It is preceded by the Pope taking his place on the cathedra. The priests take part in it. Whilst this great act of the Saviour is re-enacted the eyes of all assisting are fixed upon it.'[1]

* * *

When the ceremony of the breaking of the bread is finished the archdeacon takes the chalice from the altar and brings it to the Pope. The paten is taken and presented to the Pope by a deacon; and on the paten are the two pieces of consecrated bread. The pontiff takes one of these pieces (the other is kept for the communion of the clergy as a symbol of fraternal union). From that piece he breaks off a small portion, which he puts into the chalice, whilst he consumes the remainder. When he puts the small fragment into the chalice he says the following prayer:

> May this mingling and consecration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be to us that receive it effectual to eternal life. Amen. —Peace be with thee.—And with thy spirit.

This mixing of the consecrated species is meant to express the unity of the Victim, and to shew also that what is present under the separate species of bread and wine is the very same, namely the one and only Person of Christ, Christ risen and glorified, always living, and ever life-giving.

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe*, p. 93.

Then the Pope communicates under the species of wine which the archdeacon holds and presents to him.

There were therefore two distinct occasions on which the elements were mixed:

(1) That of the *Sancta* at the Pax.

(2) The mixing of the small fragment which has been consecrated at the Mass of the day.

By the 9th or 10th century the ceremony of the *Sancta* had disappeared. The rite of the second mixing took its place. At the same time the breaking of the bread changed its place in the Mass. It lost that prominence it had in the papal Mass of the eighth century: the celebrant performing it during the prayer *Libera nos*, a prayer that has no connection with it. 'As at other parts of the Mass there is also an abbreviation here, and we can understand it in this part of the Mass more particularly as there was no special text to be found in the old sacramentaries.'[1]

The Eucharist is the *Mystery of Faith par excellence.*

Sight, touch, and taste, in Thee are each deceived;

. . . . . .

God only on the Cross lay hid from view;
But here lies hid at once the Manhood too.[2]

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *ibid.*, p. 286.
[2] Hymn, *Adoro Te.*

And therefore we can say that the act of faith in the real presence of Christ is the most sublime we can make.

At the very moment that the Church by her ministers gives to her children the *consecrated bread* she demands from them an act of supreme faith in the Eucharistic Christ as a token of the complete homage of their intellects. The pontiff who gave the consecrated bread pronounced these words as ancient as they are concise: CORPUS CHRISTI, *the Body of Christ.* In one words the communicants signified their minds' adoration: AMEN, *so be it.*

They remained standing (the attitude of respect and rejoicing as seen in the prayer on Sundays and in Paschal Time). They held up their right hand supported by their left hand; and the women covered their right hand with a piece of white linen which was known as the *Dominical* and was their own personal property. The bishop or the priest distributed to them the sacred particle, placing it in their hands whilst they themselves placed it in their mouths.

The inscription on the tomb of Pectorius, which dates back to the first part of the 3rd century and which was discovered at Autun in 1829 has an allusion to this practice of receiving holy communion in the palm of the hand. You remember

that, in the early Church, the fish was a mystic symbol of the Saviour. It runs thus:

> Oh divine race of the celestial fish receive with a contrite heart, while yet among mortals, immortal life in the divine waters. Friend, refresh thy soul with the eternal waves of that wisdom which confers treasures upon us. Receive the sweet refreshment as the honey of the Saviour of the Saints. Satisfy thy hunger, thou hast the Fish in thy hands.

It was the custom of the bishop to distribute communion under the species of bread, whilst it was for the deacon to give the chalice saying: *Sanguis Christi, the Blood of Christ,* whilst the faithful replied AMEN.

At Rome in the 8th century the *Ordo Romanus I* directed that the communicants should receive the Precious Blood from a vessel through a tube made of gold or silver.

For several hundreds of years the faithful communicated under both kinds. But even then there were instances of communion under one kind alone. From the 12th century the practice of communicating under the species of bread alone spread rapidly. In the 14th century this custom became universal. By a decree of the Council of Constance (Session xiii, June 15, 1415) this custom got the force of law; and this law was solemnly confirmed at the Council of Trent (Session xxi, 1-3).

We find no mention in the ancient sacramentaries or in the first *Ordines Romani* of the prayers said before, during or after the communion of the priest.

These prayers, which were placed definitively in the Missal of Pius V (1570) were introduced into the ordinary of the Mass through the piety of the Middle Ages, and through influences outside Rome. These prayers are nevertheless most beautiful; and they 'can provide the faithful with prayers of preparation for communion which are conspicuous for their beauty. We advise them to use them, to ponder them, and to nourish their devotion upon them. They cannot find any better nourishment for their souls.'[1]

Only one among these ten prayers is framed in the first person plural, namely, the *Quod ore sumpsimus*. For this prayer is ancient in its style and in its origin. It is a Roman postcommunion found in the sacramentaries of Popes Leo, Gelasius and Gregory. To-day we find it in the Roman Missal as the postcommunion for the Thursday of Passion Week.

* * *

There are two chants in this part of the Mass, the *Agnus Dei*, and the antiphon called the *Communion*.

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *ibid.*, p. 324.

The chant of the AGNUS DEI was introduced by Pope Sergius (687-701) at Rome. The *Liber Pontificalis* speaking of that Pontiff says that he 'instituted the *Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis* which was to be sung by the clergy and people at the breaking of the Body of the Lord.'

The *Agnus Dei* is found in the Gregorian Sacramentary and also in the *Ordo Romanus* where it is to be sung by the schola. It would seem that at first it was sung only once. Our practice of to-day is set down by John Beleth (12th century).

Whilst the faithful were receiving Holy Communion the choir sang the antiphon AD COMMUNIONEM.

This goes back to the 4th century, for St. Augustine mentions that it was introduced in Africa in his day.

A psalm was sung either wholly or in part according to the number of communicants. It ended with the doxology *Gloria Patri . . . .*; and this psalm was preceded and followed by an antiphon. From the 12th century this chant was gradually shortened. Now there remains only the antiphon, and that is placed after the communion of the faithful.

The almost universal custom at first was to sing the 33rd psalm, *Benedicam Dominum omni tempore*. It was chosen without doubt on account of

the verse : O taste and see that the Lord is sweet. We find this antiphon in the Mass for the 8th Sunday after Pentecost.

* * *

After the Communion comes the thanksgiving.

The thanksgiving in the Roman Mass is made up of two prayers : one, the actual *giving of thanks,* the other the *benediction.*

The former prayer is called the prayer *Ad complendum* (to complete) in the Gregorian Sacramentary and in the *Ordo Romanus I, II,* and *III.* It is known as the *Post Communionem* in the Gelasian Sacramentary and in those of France. This name is used to-day : the POSTCOMMUNIO.

Mgr. Batiffol writes : 'The prayer after the Communion alludes pointedly, like the collect, to the feast of the day or season, and more pointedly still to the Communion which had just been given : it begs from God the grace that the communicants should return from the heavenly banquet having garnered all the fruit possible for their souls.'[1]

I will cite a few examples :

Spread in us, O Lord, the Spirit of Thy love, and, in Thy goodness, unite in charity those whom Thou hast filled with the same bread from heaven (The Friday after Ash Wednesday).

We beg of Thee, O Almighty God, that we may be numbered among the members of Him

[1] Mgr. Batiffol, *ibid.,* p. 296.

Who has admitted us to partake of His Body and of His Blood (Saturday of the third week of Lent).

May the reception of this Sacrament, O Lord, purify us from sin and lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven (Friday of the third week of Lent).

Having been given the food of immortality, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that what we have received with our mouth we may cherish with a pure heart (21st Sunday after Pentecost).

Filled with the food of spiritual nourishment we suppliantly implore Thee, O Lord, by the partaking of this mystery to scorn the things of earth and love the things of Heaven (Second Sunday of Advent).

The second prayer, which is a *form of blessing*, is found only in the ferial Masses of Lent, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday. It is called the prayer SUPER POPULUM, and is thus styled by the missal.

The prayers *Super populum* always make an allusion to the people who assist at the Mass, upon whom is invoked the favour of God. The prayer *Respice* of the Wednesday of Holy Week is well-known; for it is the concluding prayer of all the hours in the office for the last three days of Holy Week:

Look upon thy children here present, we beseech Thee, O Lord, for Our Lord Jesus Christ has been pleased to be delivered into the hands of the wicked for us and to endure the sufferings of the Cross.

It may be that you are surprised to see how short is the Roman prayer of thanksgiving. Rome here is in line with the earliest tradition. Remembering the advice of the Apostle the Christians of those days were concerned not so much to give thanks explicitly during the few minutes after the communion as to spend their lives 'giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father' (Eph. v, 20). Does not the Church ask in the postcommunion of the Sunday after the Ascension:

> Filled, O Lord, with sacred gifts, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may ever continue in thanksgiving.

* * *

The sacrifice is complete: the **Mass is finished.** According to the *Ordines Romani* of the 8th century, the deacon, at a sign from the presiding Pontiff, dismisses the faithful with: ITE, MISSA EST, go, you are dismissed. This phrase is classical. It was said at Rome when the Senate was adjourned: *mittere* or *dimittere senatum.* The people respond to the deacon: *Deo gratias;* then, with this cry of gratitude, the people disperse.

The Pontiff leaves the altar and goes to the *secretarium.* As he goes out, the bishops and priests say to him: *Jube, domne, benedicere;* the Pope replies: *Benedicat nos Dominus,* and they reply *Amen.* The Pontiff blesses in turn the vari-

ous groups of clerics and people who crowd round him as he passes along.

* * *

May these short explanations help you to grow in the knowledge and appreciation of Holy Mass. May they inspire you with a greater devotion for the Church's sacrifice. Of that sacrifice Bossuet has set down this beautiful and apt definition:

'The Church, which offers the bread and the wine which are to be changed into the Body and the Blood, and which then offers this Body and this Blood after they have been consecrated, concludes it by a third oblation, this time of herself.'

This is in accord with another definition, this time of St. Augustine, in words not less beautiful:

'The whole of the redeemed City, that is the gathering of the company of the saints, is the universal sacrifice offered to God by the High Priest Who has offered Himself for us in His Passion. Such is the sacrifice of the Christians: to be all one body in Jesus Christ; and it is this mystery which the Church celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, in which she offers herself in the oblation she makes to God.'

PER IPSUM, ET CUM IPSO, ET IN IPSO EST TIBI DEO PATRI OMNIPOTENTI IN UNITATE SPIRITUS SANCTI OMNIS HONOR ET GLORIA.

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